

PRIVATE LANDS INITIATIVE (PLI)



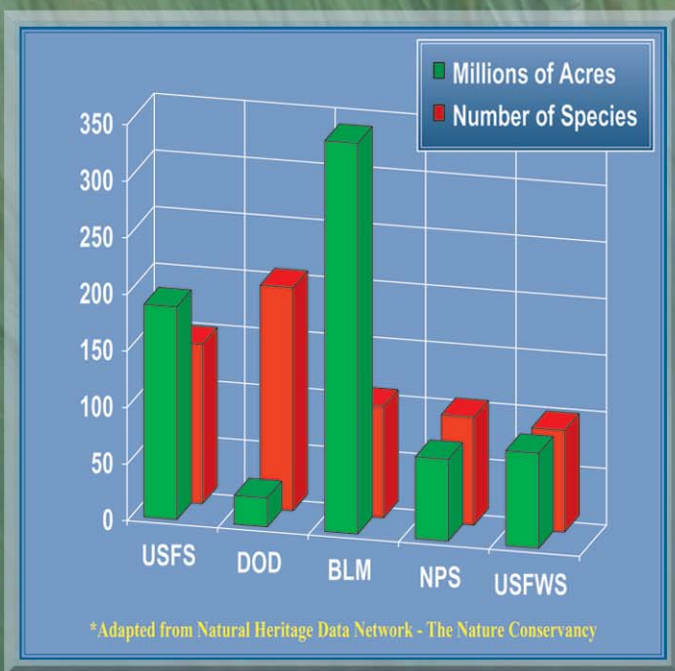
"Some day in the near future. An army general somewhere may look back wistfully on the day when his or her neighbor was an endangered species"

• Former Assistant Secretary of the Army •

WHY PLI IS NEEDED

Urban development is increasing rapidly around the country and is the most significant factor contributing to the loss of habitat and endangered species.

With more than 50 percent of Americans living in the suburbs, 19 million acres of once rural land in the U.S. are now urbanized. Many of these suburbs are rising near Army installations that were established far from public view. These installations now suffer from the same urban sprawl that has severely impacted our natural resources. This is referred to as encroachment.



Encroachment is defined as urban development surrounding military installations that affects the ability of the military to train realistically. Communities surrounding installations complain of training-related dust, smoke and noise. More than 40 percent of installations report encroachment issues.

Development has also made it more difficult for the military to comply with endangered species requirements. The rapid growth of urban sprawl has accidentally caused military installations to become islands of biodiversity. For example, Camp Pendleton's 150,000 acres are the only thing preventing the merging of San Diego and Los Angeles. One hundred and seventy federally listed threatened and endangered species make their homes on 94 Army installations, and 12 installations have land designated as critical habitat. Therefore, the Army has had to limit training activities and spend millions of dollars each year to meet endangered species requirements.

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) does not provide any relief for the national security mission. Therefore, the military must be able to maintain its obligation to readiness while supporting the remainders of once flourishing ecosystems. Those who seek to limit military training must remember that it is the existence of these installations that has permitted these islands of biodiversity to flourish. It is important to find an alternative to the limiting of military training, especially during our current state of crisis.

At least half of the nation's protected species rely on private lands to meet habitat requirements.

With approximately 70 percent of land in America owned privately, successful conservation strategies must involve these properties. Many efforts to protect these areas have proved ineffective. Therefore, a different approach must be undertaken.

PLI DEFINED

The Private Lands Initiative involves a cooperation agreement between the Army and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to cost-share the purchase of land titles or conservation easements from willing land owners (at fair market value) to minimize incompatible land use.

The NGO officially purchases and manages the land titles or easements. The Army uses the land for low-impact training and to meet natural resource conservation requirements.

PLI OBJECTIVES

- Reduce training restrictions
- Meet ESA recovery responsibility
- Prevent development along the boundary
- Increase available maneuver space
- Prevent future threatened and endangered species listings
- Reduce Army's time and financial investment in natural resource management

A larger partnership of non-governmental and governmental agencies may assist in acquisition recommendations, research, management, and funding of these private lands. A partnership included in PLI decisions reduces land-use conflict across areas owned by various public and private stakeholders. A diverse array of objectives may be met on one piece of land. For example, there may be a cooperative agreement between the Army and The Nature Conservancy to purchase land titles or easements. The cooperative agreement may exist under an umbrella of a partnership between the Army, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state fish and game. This may allow for low-impact Army training, conservation of endangered species, and public use

such as hunting. Since all stakeholders have invested time and/or money into the land that has been acquired they all get a return. Though partnering with several stakeholders may be beneficial, the PLI cooperative agreement can exist as its own entity.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PLI IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of PLI requires a large investment of time and money. Therefore, several questions must be answered before undertaking this task.

Is it too late?

There must be undeveloped land available. It is too late for an installation completely surrounded by development.

Is the land affordable?

In some areas, land prices are too high for feasible purchase.

How is the land being used?

If land is being used for ranches or timber harvest, more land may be acquired in a single purchase.

What are the natural resource issues?

In order to gain the involvement of an NGO there must be an environmental benefit in land acquisition, such as endangered species recovery.

Is there a willing NGO?

There must be an NGO willing to cooperate with Army training needs that has the ability to purchase lands.

Who are potential partners?

It is beneficial to gain the cooperation of many organizations and private landholders and be familiar with their objectives.

How does it meet Army training objectives?

The purchase of land easements or titles must meet the Army's mission of readiness and/or stewardship.



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